

## [Edward W. Riley]

1

Folk stuff - Rangelore

Gauthier.Sheldon F.

Rangelore.

Tarrant Co,Dist.,#7 [28?]

Page #1

FC 240

Edward W. Riley, 70 past, living at 1111 Washington [?], was born in Lawrence co, Tenne, prior to the commencement of the Civil War. He has [?] from stating his age for several years past, he states, because of the belief that one should not think about age. His father, James D. Riley, was a prosperous plantation [?] and business man prior to the Civil War [?] lost his business during the war and at the conclusion his finance was in a destitute condition. The Riley family migrated to [?] in 1877. They traveled by train to [?] and then by wagon and team to Hill co,. James D. Riley located his family on a tract of land situated about 18 miles E. of the Brazos River. The Rileys engaged in the farming and run cattle in the open range. Edward Riley assisted his father until he was about 18 years old and then entered business of his own dealing in cattle and horses. He lost his business during the [?] of 1893 and then went to W. Texas. He took charge of establishing a ranch in [?] co. for J. Edmonson. He later established a stock farm of his own and engaged in the realestate business and has followed the realestate business during his later years.

[?] story of range lige follows:

## Library of Congress

"My folks were natives of Tenn., and lived in Lawrence co, at which place I was born. Regarding the time I was born or my age, I have for some time past refrained from mentioning it, because I do not want to be reminded constantly about being aged.

"My father's name was James D. Riley. He owned and operated a plantation, also, was engaged in diverse other kinds of business.

"At the commencement of the Civil War he was rated as a wealthy man, but at the conclusion of the War he was a financial wreck, as many other in the Southern States were. [???] Tex 2 He concluded to try and rehabilitate his financial position in Texas and migrated to the State in 1877. We traveled to Dallas Texas, by train, which was the end of the railroad so far a passenger, service at that date. The railroad had entered Fort Worth, several months prior to our arrival, but back in Tenn., tickets were not sold for any point beyond Dallas.

"From Dallas we traveled overland, in a covered wagon pulled by a team, to Mill co, Texas, where my father negotiated for a tract of land. On this land we established a home and engaged in farming, also ranged a few cattle on the open range.

"The main factor which caused father to settle in Hill Co. was that a colony of Tenn., folks were located there.

"At the time of our arrival Mill co, had a few settlements [?] which were, for the most part, along streams of water and near timber brakes. The prairie or uplands wese open range, on which ranged the [?] of cattle.

"Father followed the system which the majority of the settlers adopted for making a livelihood and that was to build up a herd of cattle. He adopted the brand of '[?]' and turned his stock loose to range with the hunderds of other animals in the section of our land's location.

## Library of Congress

"Father hired two cowhands and they and I rode the range. We [???] general watch over the hred, which we did in co-operation on with the other ranchers of the territory. The ranchers worked together attending to the cattle on the range, also doing the roundup work.

"Father devoted most of his time attending to the develop developing 3 his farm and attending to the crops.

"We wwere compelled, and did, live off of what nature provided. That is to say, we lived from the produce of the farm and wild game which was there in abundance. It may seem increditable, but wild game was so plentiful that the animals were a [?] to our crops. We, of course, had the filed fenced to keep out the deer and others beast, but the wild [?] were hard to cope with. For instance, our first corn crop was placed in an improvised crib. The crib was built of rails and the walls were about six feet high, but had no roof. It was a place to put the corn and keep the stock from getting to it. Well, the prairie chickens came to the crib by the thousands and were getting the corn mighty fast. We were compelled to place a cover on the crib. I killed many prairie chickens with a club which came to the crib.

"Wild turkey were another wild foul which were a menac to the crops and compelled us to fight off.

"So far as food was concerned no one worried about being in want of it. All the settlers had to do in securing themselves and family a food, was to raise some corn, wheat and vegetables. The wheat we took to the local corn miller where the grains were ground and the pay for the grinding was a part of the grist.

"I speak about the local miller, but our [?] was off a distance of 18 miles, however, such distances were considered local those days. A trip to [?] was a whole days job. [When?] we made a trip to the mill [?] started before daylight and at times were able to complet the round trip by sundown and at other times 4 we would not arrive home until after dark. The

## Library of Congress

time we we spent getting a grist depended on the number of people ahead of us at the mill. There were always more or less customers waiting for their grist and each had to wait their turn to be served.

“When we had raised our first crop and began to take grist to the mill I was just a young lad, but old enough to be depended upon to drive the team and attend to getting the grist. On my first trip to the mill alone, I had my first introduction to one of the Texas customs of those days.

“I started an hour before sunup, as usual when going to the mill. I had made a couple trips with father and knew there was excellent fishing in the Brazos River, on which stream the mill was located. Therefore, I was anxious to make good time going, so I would have plenty of time to fish, before or after I receive [?] my grist. About six miles from our home was a patch of woods. The road through the woods twisted and turned back and forth between the trees. Just before I arrived at the woods a desire to catnap came on me and when I reached the timber I was dozing. I was awoke suddenly by the team shying off the road. I reined the team back to the road immediately and then looked to find what caused the team's action. There at the side of the [?] was a [man hanging from?] a tree at the end of a new rope. The [?] weight at the end of the rope caused it to untwist, as a [??] will do until it is completely stretched.

Well, when I came up to this, then, good [?] the rope [???] completely stretched and, therefore, the man was [?] and round and round slowly. 5 “As you know there are certain things which happens during one's life which registers more strongly on a persons mind than others. Well, this sight at the early dawn of a spring morning is still with me and I can visualize the body easily and see the fellow plain as I did that morning right at this minute going round and round.

“When I saw the man I lost no time in whipping up the team to get away from the spot. I looked back two or three times and the man was still going round and round. I kept

## Library of Congress

whipping up the horses and pulling my hat back on my head when my hair raised it off of my skull. I finally lost sight of the man going round and round and then my/ hair settled so I could give all my time to driving which I did to get out of the woods.

"I had not traveled far until I heard human voices off a distance. Just as I passed out of the timber I sighted a party of mountain men and when they sighted me they started to ride towards me. When we met I reconized only one of the men and he was one of our neighbors. He spoke to me and asked:

"Did you see any body on your way to this point?"

"Yes", I answered, 'I saw a man hanging at the end of a rope with his feet about six inches from the ground and he was [?] round and round'.

"The spokesman smiled a little at my remarks and replied [?] you saw?' I told him I had seen a thing or any

[?] on with my grist and was fortunate in being one [?] the mill that day and so was served early. I did 6 not remain to fish that day, because I was anxious to pass the tree where the man was going round and round, before dark set in. However, when I arrived at the spot there was no sign of the man going round and round.

"The man which went round and round, I learned afterwards, was proven guilty of stealing hosses, by them whom I met that morning.

"Among our greatest troubles were fighting rustlers. We could handle the cattle drifts during and before storms, or a stampede, but the rustlers presented a problem which was dangerous to handle also caused considerable loss.

"Horses were the animals which the rustlers stole mostly during the first few years after we came to Texas. At that time it was not necessary to steal cattle, because there still existed large numbers of Mavericks and if one wanted cattle the critters could be obtained on the

## Library of Congress

range. After the Mavericks disappeared then rustling of cattle became a vocation of many persons for a while.

“Horse stealing continued to be a big problem so long as horses were raised on the range. Horses were handled easier in driving off of the range and the sale of the animals could be found in many more places. A horse thief could drive a number of horses off about as fast as they could be trailed. . Thereofre, if a thief who had a days start, he was hard to catch.

“Stolen horses were driven to La., Tenn., Miss., and Ark., where farming was more extensively developed, and at those places 7 sold. The thief could drop into any farming steelement and find a market for some of the horses.

“Rustling became so prevalent for a time that ranchers adopted and organized the [?] means of combating the menace. It became necessary for the ranchers to deal directly with the rustlers, because the law enforcement officals were not meeting the menace and depredations of the rustlers. In some instances the officals were coreced into refraining from adequately, dealing with the stealing and in a few instances the officals were involved with the rustlers.

On the Trinity Creek bottom N.E. of Grandview there now is still standing an Oak tree which was the court house and temple of justice used by the [?] of ranchers who inforced their law. The tree is a large one and during its early period of growth it was bent out of its normal position. The tree grew in a slanting position and one special limb extends out in a straight level with the ground. During one two year period I know of 11 men whom were made good citizens by hanging at the end of a rope from that straight limb. The 11 hanged men were the results of 55 trials held under the tree.

“The results of the trials held under this temple of justice varied. Some of the accused were found not guilty, some were ordered to leave the country and some were given

## Library of Congress

another chance, with a warning to [not come?] before the [?] again accused of being mixed in any rustling.

“ at At those trials one man sat as judge. Witness were heard for and against the accused. After all the testimony was 8 presented the verdict resulted from a vote of the members of the [?] present. Jimmy [?] was the judge who sat during the trials of the 55 men of whom I speak.

“In Sherman Texas, there is an oak tree still standing which has a record of furnishing the limb from which 55 men were hanged, that is the tree was standing a year ago.

“Many men took advantage of the condition existing on the cattle range following the Civil War, and gathered a herd of cattle from unbranded cattle which ran the range. Their action led into trouble which resulted in shooting many [?].

“The range contained thousands of unbranded cattle which / were not attended to during the war for various reasons. [?] the reasons were lack of men to do work and no market. The Federal Army had control of the Mississippi River and the Texas ranchers could not [??] cattle to the Confederate Army [?] the population E. of the Mississippi River. Therefore, cattle multiplied by the thousands and many were not branded. So [??] particular critter belong was a question impossible to [?]. [?] the rule followed was each/ rancher put his brand on the animal found on the range with his cattle. The branding of Mavericks became a business, after the cattle market was provided, which finally led to trouble, because some ranchers considered stealing of their critters was taking place.

“I shall relate an incident which is typical of the maverick branding business existing during that time.

“A young fellow, who was captain in the Confederate Army, 9 returned home after the war and looked into the range condition. He then went at the work of gathering himself a herd

## Library of Congress

in a highly organised way. I shall not [?] on his named, because he became one of the promanent ranches of Texas and has close relatives living now.

“He negotiated for a tract of land located on the line of Hill and Johnson Counties. He built a fence around the tract of land and a head quarters at the entrance. While [?] the fence he fed corn and oats to a string of high class range horses which he had bought. Those horses were put in excellent condition by exercising and were ready for hard, fast and many miles of riding.

“When all things were ready he, with expert horsemen and [?], rode the range gathering cattle and gathered all the Mavericks which they could find, and they gathered many head of cattle. The cattle were placed in the pasture and branded.

“It was not long until other ranchers began ot object to the method the ex-captain was using and finally the young fellow was notified to desist. He refused to comply with the request or demand and continued with his work.

“Several of the ranchers discussed the matter and finally concluded to hang the lad on the grounds he was taking cattle which belong to others. A commettee was selected to call upon the young fellow and hold the rope party. Among them whom were selected was an uncle of Dr Chas Harris, head of the [?] hospital located in Fort Worth. 10 “The [?] started for the young fellows ranch early of the morning agreed on for holding the party. All the members of the party were inthusiastic at the start of the trip, but while riding towards the ranch the justice of their act troubled some of the members of the party. The one most seriously trouble was the uncle of Dr Chas Harris. When the party stopped at a stream to water their mounts, Harris's uncle argued, with doubt, about the justice of the party's purpose, but the majority of the members/ insisted on carrying out their purpose. At noon when the party stopped for feeding, Harris's uncle again brought up the question, still the majority insisted on holding the party as planed, but showed some weakness. The party continued on until they arrived at the entrance of the ranch headquarters and there they



## Library of Congress

stopped for a final parley. Harris's uncle again argued against a rope party and predicated his position on the fact that the young fellow was doing nothing but what each of the committee had done and would do again. That the only difference between the ex-soldier and them present, was that the young fellow went about the work in a systemized and business way, and was taking all the Mavericks off of the range. He put the question to each man about whether or not he had branded Mavericks. Each man admitted to doing so. The party ended with all agreeing that the young fellow had showed more energy and business sense than any member of the committee. The party all returned home and [?] the young fellow was [?] prevented from becoming one of the leading cattlemen of Texas.

“To illustrate the characteristics developed in the early 11 settlers of Texas, which were due to varied conditions which they were compelled to contend with, I shall mention a incident relating to the citizens' anger about fencing land.

“About the first fence put up in the Hill and Johnson counties section of the range, was built by a man named Pool. He was related to ex-Governor Bell of Tenn.. The fence was built during the later part of the 70's and was placed around a tract of land about 12 miles S.[?]. of Clerburne. Part of that fence is still visible.

“When the fence was completed, the good citizens decided that in the interest of the country's welfare the fence should be destroyed and that the good and honest citizens did.

“The act was clearly a violation of the law and Pool filed charges of malicious trespass, malicious destruction of property and, also, filed a civil suit for damages against them who engaged in the act.

“The case come on for trial before a jury of good and honest citizens. The evidence was heard and the defense was [exonerated?]. The whole defense argument was predicated on the contention that the accused acted for the good of the country in preventing the range from being destroyed through fencing it. And, notwithstanding the law, circumstances alters its application and destruction of a fence to preserve the range

## Library of Congress

justified the defendants' act. So, the jury sitting in a court of law turned it into a court of equity and justified the act.

"The fact is that [?] of the accused desired to cause Pool 12 any damage, but committed the act as a notice to all people that the range must remain free.

"However, it was not long after a practical fence was placed on the market, until the open range disappeared, but there was a great deal of fence cutting, and in some instances blood spilled, before the fencers won their fight for a right to fence their land.

"Two men, one named Glidden and the other Edwards, were the first men to place a practical wire for fencing on the [market?] and they make millions out of supplying the demand for wire with which to fence Texas.

"The first so called wire fence built in Texas was built by [?] King, owner of the famous King ranch before his death, which fence was built sometime just prior to the Civil War. Some of the fence can be seen on the King Ranch at this time. The wire used was shipped to this country [?] England. It came by boat to the King's place. The boat anchored in the Gulf and the wire was loaded on a barge and floated to the land.

"The wire used by King was not real wire, but was a flat metal strand about 1/2 inch wide without barbs. The wire was run through holes which were bored in the post and not fastened with staples as wire is fastened to the post today. That fencing material was too expensive for practical use and the King fence was about the only fence put up of that nature.

"The next step in the production of wire for fencing purpose was the flat strands twisted and barbs placed at short intervals. That wire proved very dangerous to cattle, because of its cutting qualities and soon became in disuse. Then followed the round strands of two wires twisted as it is today, but without barbs and then the barbs was placed between the

## Library of Congress

strands as we see it today. This later wire was the Glidden and Edwards [wire?] and it met the fencing needs satisfactory. There was tons of it used after it survived the wire cutters.

"I recall an incident which took place in Alvarado, Johnson co, which shows the intense feeling developed over fencing and wire cutting. A fellow was arrested for wire cutting and placed in the Alvarado jail. The jail was built of logs, which was the way jail in small town were usually built those days. The man who had his wire cut followed the sheriff to Alvarado and shot the accused after he was placed in jail. The shooting was done through the cracks of the logs. This, also, shows the nature of some of the frontier jails.

"Now, I shall return to cattle raising. I remained with my father and assisted him with his herd until I was a young man. We never [?] a drive, but sold our cattle to drovers who came through the country gathering cattle from small ranchers. The drover would gather cattle until they had a herd of from 2500 to 3500 head. Some of those cattle were sold in Fort Worth, after the meat packing industry was established in the city, some were shipped to Northern markets, and some were driven to Northern ranges far North as [?], where the cattle were fattened and then sold for beef.

"When I was old enough to engage in business on my own. I started a horse ranch and run a few cattle as a side line. I preferred horses, because the animal is easier to handle than the cattle. For instance, cattle would drift a hundred miles or more from their home range in front of a storm and remain where they stopped drifting. When a storm descended the riders would have to ride fast and long trying to hold a herd of cattle and then some would get away. During the general roundup, we frequently found cattle which belonged more than a hundred miles away.

"Horses will drift to some extent, but riders can hold a herd of horses easily, compared with holding cattle. Horses will not roam away from their home range so long as there is plenty of grass and water. If they do drift away before a storm to find shelter, they will return to their range after the storm ceases.

## Library of Congress

"The stallion running with a harem of mares will look after the herd, [?] watched the stallion and the stud attend to keeping the rest of the herd together and protect it from deperdations. A stallion will gather a herd of from 20 to 30 mares. To succeesfully handle a herd of horses on the range it is necessary to run a stallion with each 25 or 30 mares. Each stallion will separate its harem from the others and keep his mares around him. With a herd of horses so blanced, very little trouble is given by the horses.

"It may be of intrest to not the diffenence intthe nature of horses and cattle raised on the range, therefore, I shall speak of some characteristics.

"The bulls running with a herd of cows will mingle with 15 each other and even go off in bunches away from the cows, except during breeding season. During breeding seasons the bulls would mingle here and there not paying any particular attention to any certain bunch of cows. On the other hand the stallion will not allow any other stallion to interfere with his harem.

"It is necessary to castrate all male colts before the animal maturers secually sexually, in order to have the young horse [?] with the herd. When a young horse is castrated the stud will not drive the animal of, but if not, the stallion will drive the young horse away from the herd about the time it is matured sexually.

"One of our jobs during the [?] roundup was to castrate all male colts, except a few we may wish to save for breeding purpose. Those colts which we saved had to be herded by theirselves.

"If left alone a stud will remain with his harem until he dies, but when the animal becomes to old to defend itself in a fight with some younger stallion, there is always a younger stallion who discovers the fact and drives the old boy off. And, each fight is always a vivious fight. When an old stud is driven off it will go off to itself and die, I presume from a broken heart.

## Library of Congress

"A stallion is rather constant with his harem, but will steal mare away from another harem if the opportunity is presented.

"I remained in the hoss business until the [?] of 1893 and during that business slump I was caught unprepared and had to close out my business.

"I got my business affairs settled by 1897 and went [?] to Nolan co, Texas, where I started a ranch for J. Edmonson, and adopted 'JE' as his brand. 16 "At the time I went West the country was just getting organised into counties at many sections. Dawson co, was then trying to get settled on the location for its county seat. The county seat then was at a place called Chicago, but there was agitation for [?] it at [?]. The question was submitted to a vote the [?] advorcatates [?], in [?] of the fact that Chicago at that time was the larger place. However, the man who owned the land around Lamesa offered a lot free to the voters in the event the county seat was located at Lamesa, and the people of Chicago had no land to offer.

Within a year after the town of Lamesa was made the county seat, about the entire town of Chicago moved to Lamesa and now the twon of Chicago is a ghost town.

"The first teacher Lamesa had was Jim Garrett and he was elected and served as the first Treasure of [?] co,

"I built the first fence in that section of the country. It was located between the railroad and Snyder.

"The country was sparcelly settled at that time, but settled rapidly. There was a block offschool and known as block 97 located [?] of Snyder and settlers located in that bolck by the score. This bolck of territory became the first farming community. Out side of bolck 97 the country was devoted to cattle ranges.

## Library of Congress

"I spent several years ranching in that section and during my first few years there the range became fenced into separate ranges with farms scattered through out the territory.

"I went to Graham in the early part of [?] and entered the horse and mule business, [?] the farmers with work stock. 17 "While at Graham I had an experience which I shall relate as it indicates some information on the life of the early days.

"During the early days everybody rode or drove a horse for traveling. The people with any sporting blood, and there were many of them, attempted to own the fastest horse. One could watch a horse race most any day, if at some place where people congregated. The races were run on the streets of the towns or over a country trail, and [??] match races between two horses. Each horse would have more or less backers and at time considerable money would change hands as wagers.

"While I was living in the Hill and Johnson counties a fellow from the North came to the section with several horses and settled and settled on a track of land. He appeared like a typical farmer and went to work breaking sod on his truck. He, also, would hire out to break sod for others.

"This Yankee had one horse [??] run and he matched it against horses of others that thought they owned a runner. The Yankee was a shrewd racer and never drove his horse faster than was necessary to win by a close finish. However, he refused to race his horse against one horse in the community which had the reputation of being the fastest animal in the section. The boys were constantly [?] the Yankee about his horse being too slow for the fast animal. But, one day, while being taunted, by a crowd of men, he suddenly acted angrily and told the boys to p put up their money. He told the crowd that he would take all the wagers they offered and placed money with a banker with which to 18 cover all offers.

"Frank McKinney, [?] the town's merchants, was a thrifty person with a large sum of money and did money lending. He was a careful person with his money, but would always invest

## Library of Congress

in a sure thing. He saw an opportunity to make some easy money, so put a large wager against the Yankee's horse.

"The race was run and the boys discovered that the Yankee's horse had just cantered in the previous races.

"Most of the crowd took their defeat in good grace, but McKinney was bitter over his loss.

"Within a week following the race a couple men were passing a tract of land where the Yankee was breaking sod and saw his paraphernalia scattered in such manner as to indicate there was some trouble. The men went to the Yankee's shack and found from the way things appeared that the fellow had not been home for several days. Several days later buzzards were noticed flying around a cotton wood grove. In those days when buzzards congerated, folks investigated to learn if it was a man or beast the buzzards were congerating to feast on. So, this investigation resulted in finding the body of the Yankee hanging at the end of a rope. His work horses were tethered close by and had consumed all the grass within their reach and were famished for the want of water and feed. The race horse was gone and a thorough search [?] to locate any of the Yankee's money. The culprit was never [?].

"Now back to Graham. When I was located at Graham it was 15 years later and McKinney was also located there then, but had 19 retired from active business, because of ill health. His mind was affected and the condition was progressive, which finally reached a stage which required someone to keep a general watch over him. He finally become so minded that no one could handle him but I. He seemed to have confidence in me and therefore it fell to my lot look after McKinney.

"McKinney had a history of Hill and Johnson counties which had been published a short time and he would read the history constantly. There was some mention of the Yankee's murder and that part seemed to hold his attention more than any other part. I became

## Library of Congress

curious about the attention McKinney was giving to the murder account and one day I asked him the following question:

"Who do you supposed killed that Yankee?"

"Edward", he replied with a perplexed look. "There are somethings in a mans life which is better to remain unsaid".

"I never pressed to question farther, because I was satisfied with the answer. I have never mentioned this fact to anyone since until this time and you are the first person I have told it to. McKinney was taken to the insane institution at [?] and there he died.

"I spent several years in the horse and mules business and during the past several years I have delt in the realestate business.